

## NORWAY

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### 1 MUSLIM POPULATIONS

Immigrants from Muslim countries started arriving in Norway in the late 1960s. Although a general ban on labour immigration was introduced in 1975, family reunification and the continuing influx of refugees and immigrants have made for a steady growth in the Muslim population in the country.<sup>2</sup> The current number of residents with a Muslim background (according to Statistics Norway's widest definition of immigrants<sup>3</sup>) would probably be around 220,000, which is 4.5 % of a total population of 5 million. In 2013, 120,800 people (i.e. around 55 % of those with a Muslim background) had signed up as members of a Muslim organisation. Approximately 53,000 of these were resident in Oslo, which means that about 8 % of Oslo's population are now members of a Muslim organisation. A survey among youth in Oslo, conducted in 2012 among pupils in the 9th, 10th and 11th grades, showed that 19.5 % gave Islam as their religion, up from 13.2% in 1996.<sup>4</sup> Among those Muslims who first

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<sup>2</sup> Gunnlaug Daugstad and Lars Østby, *Det flerkulturelle Norge. Et mangfold av tro og livssyn* (Multicultural Norway: Many faiths and life stances)", Oslo: Statistics Norway 2008. An updated bibliography on Islam in Norway is available on Leirvik's home page: <http://folk.uio.no/leirvik/tekster/IslamiNorge.html#bibliografi>

<sup>3</sup> People who themselves migrated to Norway and their children born in Norway, including those with only one parent who was born abroad.

<sup>4</sup> Øia, Tormod, "Ung i Oslo 2012 (Youth in Oslo 2012)," NOVA Rapport 7/12, p.144. [www.ungdata.no/id/25829.0](http://www.ungdata.no/id/25829.0) accessed 2 January 2014.

came as migrant labourers and later experienced family reunification and growth in Norway, the most numerous group are those with a Pakistani background, who in 2013 amounted to 39,000. In the same year, Turks numbered 20,500 and Moroccans 11,400. Among those who came as refugees and asylum seekers, Somalis (33,800) and Iraqis (30,600) were the most numerous, followed by Iranians (21,300), Bosnians (17,900), Kosovo-Albanians (15,200) and Afghans (14,600).<sup>5</sup> Converts constitute a small percentage (approximately 1.5%) of the Muslim community.<sup>6</sup> An entire spectrum of Pakistani (Barelwi, Deobandi, etc.)<sup>7</sup> and Turkish (Diyanet, Süleymanci, Milli Görüs) Islamic traditions is now well established, whereas Bosnians and Somalis represent radically different popular traditions.<sup>8</sup> Attendance of religious ceremonies and meetings organised by faith communities varies individually and between different Muslim groups. In a survey from 2005-2006 Pakistanis reported an average of 31, Somalis 25 and Turks 23 times a year, whereas the corresponding figures reported by Iraqis were seven and for both Bosnians and Iranians only twice a year.<sup>9</sup>

## 2 ISLAM AND THE STATE

Norway is a social-democratic welfare state with a National Church (the Lutheran Church of Norway) which is mentioned as such (literally, "Norway's people's church") in the revised

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<sup>5</sup> The cited figures refer to country background, not to citizenship. Acquisition of Norwegian citizenship is regulated by a law of 2006 ([www.udi.no/templates/Tema.aspx?id=7394](http://www.udi.no/templates/Tema.aspx?id=7394)), accessed 2 January 2014.

<sup>6</sup> No figures are available, but estimates indicate 1,000 – 1,500 persons. For an account of conversion to Islam in Scandinavia see Roald, Anne Sofie, *New Muslims in the European Context: The Experience of Scandinavian Converts* (Leiden: Brill, 2004) and idem: "The conversion process in stages: new Muslims in the twenty-first century". *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 3: 2012, s. 347-362.

<sup>7</sup> See for instance Ahlberg, Nora, *New Challenges – Old Strategies: Themes of Variation and Conflict among Pakistani Muslims in Norway* (Helsinki: Finnish Anthropological Society, 1990).

<sup>8</sup> For an overview of various tendencies, see Vogt, Kari, *Islam på norsk* (Islam in Norwegian) (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2008 [2000]); Jacobsen, Christine M., "Norway", in Larsson, Göran (ed.), *Islam in the Nordic and Baltic Countries* (London: Routledge 2009), pp 18-40.

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Norway (SSB), "Levekår blant innvandrere i Norge 2005-2006 (Living conditions among immigrants in Norway)", SSB Rapport 2008/5. The survey was based on interviews with 3,053 non-Western immigrants and descendants of immigrants.

Constitution from 2012. Since the 1960s, religious pluralism has been increasingly accommodated, and a 1964 supplement to the Constitution guarantees that “All inhabitants of the Realm shall enjoy free exercise of religion.” The Lutheran Church of Norway, to which 77 % of the population nominally belong, retains a dominant public position, and is almost fully financed from the public purse (including salaries for clergy and much of the running costs of parishes, including maintenance of buildings). Under compensatory measures introduced in 1969, every faith and (from 1981) life stance community that registers is entitled to the same amount per member in public funding; this today includes registered Islamic organisations.<sup>10</sup> The constitutional amendments from 2012 corroborate the established policy of public funding of the National Church as well as of the other faith communities.

### 3 MAIN MUSLIM ORGANISATIONS

The Islamic Council of Norway (Islamsk Råd Norge, Storgaten 39 (5. etg.) N-0183 Oslo, tel.: ++47 48486400, [www.irn.no](http://www.irn.no)), founded 22 October 1993, is the umbrella organisation. An invitation from the Church of Norway to set up a Contact Group between Christian and Muslim leaders in Norway played some part in this process.<sup>11</sup> The Council comprises the majority of Sunni Muslim congregations in Norway (according to the web-page around 40 member organisations, totalling more than 60,000 members). The political authorities have gradually established regular communication with the Islamic Council (as with other established faith communities and their umbrella organisations), and since 2007

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<sup>10</sup> Registration is uncomplicated and does not require a minimum number of members.

<sup>11</sup> Vogt, *Islam på norsk*, p.167.

the Council has also received a financial grant from the government which enables the Council to pay a full-time general secretary.

Transnational movements such as Tabligh-i-Jamaat, and the Muslim Brotherhood, several different Shi'ite groups, and a small but active Ahmadiyya community also have a presence. From the mid-1990s, separate youth and students' as well as women's organisations have been formed, largely independent of national background.<sup>12</sup> In the last few years several new youth and student organisations, with different theological orientations, have appeared. The fastest growing youth organization is Islam Net, a conservative group of Salafi orientation which has gained increasingly critical attention from public media as well as from researchers since its inception in 2008.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4 MOSQUES AND PRAYER HOUSES

In 2009, the total number of registered Muslim congregations was 126. A list of mosques, including contact information, is available on the internet.<sup>14</sup> The varieties of Norwegian Islam are evident in different kinds of adapted architecture.<sup>15</sup> Most of the 40 or so Muslim prayer locations in Oslo are in converted flats, factories or office premises, but seven mosques are purpose-built, four of them by Norwegian-Pakistani organisations (including an Ahmadiyya mosque) plus one Somali, one Kosovo-Albanian and one (multinational) Shi'ite mosque. There are no purpose-built mosques outside Oslo, but there are numerous prayer locations in

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<sup>12</sup> See for instance Jacobsen, Christine M., *Islamic Traditions and Muslim Youth in Norway* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), and idem, "Religiosity of young Muslims in Norway: The quest for authenticity", in Cesari, Jocelyne, and McLoughlin, Sean (eds), *European Muslims and the Secular State* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2005), pp.155-168.

<sup>13</sup> See Sindre Bangstad and Marius Linge: "IslamNet - puritansk salafisme i Norge", *Kirke og Kultur* 4: 2013, pp. 254-272 and Marius Linge: "Den konservative vekkelsen. Om IslamNet, Profetens Umma og salafismens fremvekst i Norge". *Samtiden* 4: 2013, pp. 38-53.

<sup>14</sup> See [www.islam.no/islam\\_i\\_norge.aspx](http://www.islam.no/islam_i_norge.aspx)

<sup>15</sup> Naguib, Saphinaz-Amal, *Mosques in Norway: The Creation and Iconography of Sacred Space* (Oslo: Novus forlag/The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 2001).

other cities and towns throughout the country (with concentrations in cities such as Stavanger, Kristiansand and Drammen). In 2010 a major controversy erupted over plans to build a mosque in Tromsø. The plans were abandoned after the Ministry of Foreign Affairs refused to approve private Saudi donations that were meant to finance the mosque.<sup>16</sup>

Some schools and universities offer prayer rooms within their premises. This practice is, however, considered to be controversial as no national guidelines exist.

## 5 CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Private schools are relatively few in Norway and took in only around 3% of primary school pupils in 2012, which reflects the extraordinary strength of the 'one school for all' (*enhetsskolen*) system. The Urtehaven Foundation runs a couple of Muslim kindergartens in Oslo, but there are currently no Muslim private schools. Most mosques offer some kind of Qur'an instruction.<sup>17</sup> In public primary and lower secondary schools, a joint course on religion and ethics was made compulsory for all students in 1997 (called "Knowledge of Christianity with Information about Religions and Life Stances" and from 2002 "Knowledge about Christianity, Religions and Life Stances").<sup>18</sup> Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and secular humanists protested against the initial curriculum because of its strong emphasis on Christianity. After a ruling of the European Court of Human Rights, the government initiated a revision of religious education (renamed "Religion, Life Stances and Ethics" in 2008) and

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<sup>16</sup> The private donor had explicitly asked for approval from the authorities.

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of Islamic nurture and education, see for instance Østberg, Sissel, *Pakistani Children in Norway: Islamic Nurture in a Secular Context*, Monograph Series (Leeds: University of Leeds, Community Religions Project, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, articles by Geir Skeie, Sissel Østberg and Heid Leganger-Krogstad in Jackson, Robert (ed.), *International Perspectives on Citizenship, Education and Religious Diversity* (London: Routledge Falmer, 2003).

of the schools' traditional statutory statement of Christian purpose. Islam has been given increasing space in the religion and ethics curricula for both primary/lower secondary and upper secondary/high school, in line with its growing presence in Norwegian society. In 2013, new controversies arose as the new conservative government decided to increase the amount of time dedicated to Christianity-related subjects. The subjects in question take a historical as well as doctrinal approach to world religions, the ideal being to present each religion on its own terms. Ethics is dealt with as a separate part of the curriculum. In addition, both the ability to engage in dialogue about religion and ethics and familiarity with modern criticism of religion are stated as competence aims. Any qualified teacher of any background may teach religion and ethics.

## 6 HIGHER AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

No initiative to establish a national training programme for imams has been taken in Norway, but the University of Oslo has discussed the possibility of establishing a 'centre for Islamic studies' and a proposal was presented to the University in 2007 by a committee which included representatives of the Islamic Council. In 2007, the University of Oslo's Faculty of Theology set up a programme for continuing education for imams, as well as for other religious leaders with a foreign background, under the heading "Being a religious leader in Norwegian society". The Islamic Council is part of the reference group for this programme and while largest groups of participants in the courses have been imams and other categories of Muslim leaders, no imams have received their basic training in Norway.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Leirvik, Oddbjørn, "Islam and education in Norway", in Aslan, Ednan (ed.), *Islamische Erziehung in Europa/Islamic and education in Europe* (Vienna: Böhlau verlag, 2009), pp.301-324.

## 7 BURIAL AND CEMETERIES

Several funeral agencies around the country offer assistance to Muslim funerals. There is also a Muslim funeral agency that provides Muslim funerals in a large part of the country. The Muslim funeral bureau *Al-Khidmat* is a member of the Islamic Council of Norway, which has a funeral working group to look into the issue of Muslim burial sites. Several ordinary undertakers have developed their competence in Islamic (and other religious) burial traditions. In Oslo hospitals, rooms are set aside for the ritual washing. Muslims in Oslo have been allocated burial sites within existing cemeteries. The conducting of burials in accordance with Muslim burial practices is still not entirely accommodated, however.<sup>20</sup> Many Muslim migrants are buried in the country of origin, but the proportion buried in Norway is increasing as people develop more important and permanent links with Norway.<sup>21</sup>

## 8 'CHAPLAINCY' IN STATE INSTITUTIONS

A study in 2003<sup>22</sup> concluded that, in spite of the fact that a growing number of prisoners and military personnel either are not members of any religion, or belong to other faiths, the Church of Norway retained its dominant position in military and prison chaplaincies. Up till now, state institutions provide only Christian chaplaincy on a regular basis, although the need to provide chaplaincy for minority religions too has been addressed several times. In prisons,

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<sup>20</sup> Plesner, Inger and Cora. Alexa Døving, *Livsfaseriter. Religions- og livssynspolitiske utfordringer i Norge* (*Life cycle rituals: Challenges related to policies of religion and lifestyles in Norway*), (Rapport, Samarbeidsrådet for tros- og livssynssamfunn, 2009)

<sup>21</sup> Døving, Cora Alexa, *Norsk-pakistanske begravelseritualer: En migrasjonsstudie*, (Norwegian-Pakistani Burial Rituals: A Migration Study) (Oslo: Unipub Forlag, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> Furseth, Inger, "Secularization and the role of religion in state institutions", *Social Compass*, vol.50 no.2 (2003), pp.191-202.

some imams have offered chaplaincy on a voluntary basis, but the Islamic Council in Norway as well as a number of other actors have called for a more permanent structure to offer Friday prayers and religious guidance to inmates. In 2008, the Soldiers' National Conference (*Soldatenes landskonferanse*) decided to promote a religiously neutral military and to hire imams and personnel from other registered faith communities outside the Church of Norway in the Field Corps, but this has not been followed up politically. The possibility of employing imams in Norwegian hospitals has also been discussed, but not yet implemented.

A State Report from January 2013, submitted to the Ministry of Culture, proposed concrete measures to develop more inclusive spiritual services in hospitals, prisons and the military.<sup>23</sup>

## 9 RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

'Id al-Fitr and 'Id al-Adha are celebrated by Muslims throughout Norway. A law of 13 June 1969 guarantees those who are not members of the Norwegian Church two days' leave from work or school per year on the occasion of religious festivals. Sacrificing animals is not permitted, and some Muslims send their *qurban* to Muslims in poorer parts of the world through relief organisations.

## 10 HALAL PRODUCTS AND ISLAMIC SERVICES

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<sup>23</sup> "Det livssynsåpne samfunn. En helhetlig tros- og livssynspolitik", NOU 1993: 1.



The Islamic Council in Norway has worked actively for a number of years to secure access to halal food for all Muslims in Norway. In cooperation with existing slaughterhouses, methods that satisfy both Islamic and Norwegian regulations have been developed, and halal meat (including beef, lamb and chicken), as well as a range of halal products such as pizzas, burgers, sausages, and cheese is now available on the Norwegian market. Norwegian rules say that the animal must be anaesthetised before slaughter, a practice that has been accepted by the Islamic Council. The issue of anaesthesia was debated in 2009 in relation to the revision of the Norwegian law on animal welfare and new EU directives on animal welfare and religious slaughter. The Norwegian law on animal welfare that came into force in 2010 continued the prohibition on slaughtering without anaesthesia. The Jewish community has lobbied against this prohibition on the grounds that it limits religious freedom, followed, in principle, by the Islamic Council although the Muslim community has generally taken a more pragmatic stand.

Although halal meat is available in some public institutions (in state universities, for example), there is still a need to ensure access to halal meat in hospitals, prisons, etc. Access to halal food in shops has increased, as a result of the Islamic Council's pragmatic cooperation with Norwegian slaughter houses (cf. above). There are no Islamic banking or finance institutions. Hajj travels are facilitated by a bureau closely cooperating with the Islamic Council.

## 11 DRESS CODES

Repeated calls have been made to ban religious headgear and the *niqab* from (parts of) public space, but there are no general rules limiting Muslim dress in public or for teachers or pupils in schools. In 2007, a debate occurred over the wearing of *niqab* in institutions of higher

education, but the institutions decided against the need for a ban. A suggestion by representatives from the Progress Party to ban face-covering clothing in public space was debated in the Parliament in 2010, but not adopted. In 2012, controversies again arose in relation to face veiling in educational institutions. A student at the University of Tromsø was excluded from class by her professor, but the University administration did not adopt a general ban. Oslo City Council and County Board of Østfold have decided to ban the use of niqab in teaching situations at their high schools.

The right of employees to wear religious headgear is not explicitly regulated by Norwegian law, but nevertheless follows from the dominant interpretation of the Working Environment Act and the Gender Equality Act. The Norwegian Labour Inspectorate defines a refusal to allow religious headgear in the work place as discrimination, and several cases have been reported to the Equality and Discrimination Ombudsman. Hijab has been accommodated in combination with uniforms in the army, the health care system, and customs and excise, and in a few work places (notably IKEA, the Ullevål University Hospital in Oslo, and Nortura) there is a hijab version of uniform. In 2008/2009 a debate occurred over whether religious headgear should be allowed in combination with uniforms in the police force. After initially signalling amendments to the police uniform regulations in order to accommodate hijab, the Ministry of Justice and the Police Department decided not to revise the existing rules. On the basis of the debate about the hijab in the police, the Board of Directors of the National Courts Administration initiated a process to regulate the use of religious and political clothing in the court room. After consulting relevant institutions and organisations the National Courts Administration decided against introducing any changes, referring to existing principles of neutrality and disqualification provisions. A suggestion from representatives from the populist Progress Party to instruct the Court Administration to revoke its decision and ban hijab, niqab, burqa and other religious and political symbols for

employees at the courts was, in line with the recommendation from the Justice Committee, rejected by the majority in the Parliament in March 2011.

## 12 PUBLICATION AND MEDIA

Some Muslim organisations in Norway (including notably the Islamic Information Association, the Islamic Cultural Centre, the Ahmadiyya, the *Idara Minhaj ul-Quran*, the Muslim Students' Association and the conservative youth organisation Islam Net) publish books and leaflets in Norwegian, most of which are translations.

There are a number of online forums, of which the most significant is [www.islam.no](http://www.islam.no), which provides practical information (on prayer times, etc.), as well as information on 'Muslim events' and a number of Islamic issues, and has a very active discussion forum. Several mosques and organisations actively use the Internet, and there are also a number of private-initiative blogs and info-pages about Islam. The web-portal [www.imam.no](http://www.imam.no) is run by a network of imams and scholars calling themselves Jamiat Ulama Norway (JUN) and aims to provide information on Islam and advice in fiqh questions. Social media have become more important, and a number of individuals and organisations are active on Twitter and Facebook. YouTube is also increasingly used for distributing videotaped lectures and seminars. A number of individual Muslim blogs add to this digital landscape.

## 13 FAMILY LAW

By applying to the *Fylkesmann* (County Governor), mosques can obtain the right to conduct marriages, which are then registered with the City Recorder's Office (*byfogdembete*) or the District Court (*tingrett*). The Norwegian marriage act guarantees the right to divorce, but

divorces obtained under religious law or the law of other countries may not be recognised. A controversial 2003 amendment to the marriage act, targeting the problem of so-called ‘limping marriages’,<sup>24</sup> introduced a new condition for the conduct of marriages, namely that spouses grant each other equal rights to divorce, a move that upset the Roman Catholic Church. Critics have argued that this amendment will have little practical impact on solving the problem of so-called limping marriages. The possibility of establishing a Shari’a council or a Muslim divorce council has also been discussed as options for dealing with these issues, but has met with considerable resistance from many quarters.<sup>25</sup> Currently, several non-governmental organisations offer counselling on family-related conflicts, including ‘limping marriages’.

Inheritance is regulated by the law of inheritance. Distribution of inheritance can be public or private; in the latter case the heirs themselves distribute the inheritance, but regulations covering minimum inheritance must be observed.

## 14 INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS

Interreligious dialogue is commonly regarded as rather well-established in Norway.<sup>26</sup> Since 1993, the Islamic Council in Norway has taken part in regular bi- and multilateral dialogues

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<sup>24</sup> This is when a civil divorce has been granted but one party refuses to recognise it with reference to religious principles and thereby limits the possibility of the other party to remarry. For a discussion of the debates and political processes on ‘limping marriages’, see Ferrari de Carli, Eli, “Muslimske kvinner, haltende ekteskap og skilsmisse: Prosessen rundt politiske initiativ til lovendringer (Muslim women, limping marriages and divorce: The process around political initiatives to change the law)”, *Norsk tidsskrift for migrasjons-forskning*, vol.9, no.1 (2008), pp.5-26, and idem, “Shari’a-råd til diskusjon (Shari’a councils under discussion)”, *Tidsskrift for Kjønnforskning*, vol.32, no.2 (2008), pp.58-72.

<sup>25</sup> For a critical discussion of legal pluralism in the Norwegian context, see Farhat Taj: *Legal Pluralism, Human Rights and Islam in Norway. Making Norwegian Law Available, Acceptable and Accessible to Women in a Multicultural Setting*. Phd-thesis, Faculty of Law, University of Oslo 2013.

<sup>26</sup> See for instance Leirvik, Oddbjørn, *Religionspluralisme: Mangfold, konflikt og dialog i Norge* (Religious Pluralism: Diversity, Conflict and Dialogue in Norway) (Oslo: Pax, 2007), and “Christian-Muslim relations in a

with other faith and life stance communities in Norway. In addition to its function as an ecumenical body for intra-Muslim consultation, the Islamic Council is a co-founder of the Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities ([www.trooglivssyn.no](http://www.trooglivssyn.no)), in which all the major religious communities in Norway as well as the Humanist Association participate. Through the interfaith council and sometimes directly, it is regularly consulted by the government in matters pertaining to the politics of religion. The Council is also an active and visible participant in public debates about religion and society in Norway, addressing social and ethical issues of common concern.

A Contact Group for the Church of Norway and the Islamic Council Norway was formed in 1992-93.<sup>27</sup> Central issues on the Contact Group's agenda have been religion in school; Muslim minority concerns in Norway; Islamophobia; the precarious situation of Christians in some Muslim countries; religion and violence; issues related to gender equality and the situation of women; freedom of expression and moral responsibility; homosexuality; and the question of conversion. In connection with the cartoon crisis in 2005-6, joint Muslim-Christian delegations from Norway went to the Middle East and Pakistan, symbolising a more conciliatory approach than that seen in neighbouring Denmark. In 2007, the Contact Group published a "Joint declaration on the freedom of religion and the right of conversion",<sup>28</sup> which also received much attention internationally. In 2009, a "Joint Statement on Violence in the Family and in Close Relationships" was launched.<sup>29</sup> The most

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state church situation: Politics of religion and interfaith dialogue", in Jamal Malik (ed.), *Muslims in Europe: From the Margin to the Centre* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004), pp.101-114.

<sup>27</sup> See <http://folk.uio.no/leirvik/Kontaktgruppa.htm>, accessed 2 January 2014. For the work of the Contact Group, see the special issue of *Norsk Tidsskrift for Misjonsvitenskap* 4: 2013 published on the occasion of the 20 years' anniversary of the Contact Group (articles by Oddbjørn Leirvik, Jan Opsal, Anne Hege Grung and Faruk Terzić).

<sup>28</sup> See [www.kirken.no/english/news.cfm?artid=149142](http://www.kirken.no/english/news.cfm?artid=149142), accessed 2 January 2014.

<sup>29</sup> See <http://kirken.no/english/news.cfm?artid=265872>, accessed 24 January 2014.

recent joint statement from 2011, reflecting both a joint study trip to Bosnia and the terrorist attacks of 22 July 2011, was titled “Opposing religious extremism”.<sup>30</sup>

Muslim organisations also take part in a number of regional interfaith councils, for instance in the cities of Drammen and Stavanger.<sup>31</sup>

## 15 PUBLIC OPINION AND DEBATE

The coverage of issues related to the Muslim population and Islam is quite significant in the Norwegian media. Studies indicate that most of the coverage is problem-oriented and stereotypical.<sup>32</sup> From the mid-1990s, most media discussions have focused on women-related issues, such as arranged or forced marriages, the question of whether a Muslim woman may marry a non-Muslim man, female genital mutilation, and the head scarf.<sup>33</sup> A particularly controversial theme more recently has been the situation of homosexual Muslims and Islam’s position on homosexuality.<sup>34</sup> Notwithstanding their continuing moral reservations against homosexuality), the Islamic Council has publicly denounced harassment of homosexuals. Muslims representing a variety of positions increasingly initiate and participate in public debate. Among the general public, inclusive attitudes compete with anxiety in relation to Islam and Muslims. Figures from the so-called ‘Integration barometer’ (IMDi 2007),<sup>35</sup> showed that eight out of ten respondents thought that the authorities should not further

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<sup>30</sup> See <http://kirken.no/english/news.cfm?artid=363357>, accessed 24 January 2014.

<sup>31</sup> See <http://www.trooglivssyn.no/index.cfm?id=367830>, accessed 2 January 2014.

<sup>32</sup> Sindre Bangstad: "Inclusion and exclusion in the mediated public sphere: the case of Norway and its Muslims", *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* 3: 2013, s. 356–370.

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion of debates on gender and Islam in Norway, see for instance Roald, Anne Sofie, *Er muslimske kvinner undertrykt?* (Are Muslim women Oppressed?) (Oslo: Pax, 2005).

<sup>34</sup> Gressgård, Randi and. Jacobsen, Christine M., “Krevende tolerance: Islam og homoseksualitet. (Demanding tolerance: Islam and homosexuality”, *Tidsskrift for Kjønnforskning*, vol.32, no.2 2008, pp.22-39.

<sup>35</sup> Integreringsbarometeret 2006, *Om befolkningens holdninger til integrerings- og mangfoldsspørsmål* (Integration barometer 2006, On the population’s attitudes to questions concerning integration and diversity), IMDi Rapport/Report 7/2007.

facilitate Muslim religious practices in Norwegian society. Half of the respondents opposed the building of mosques, and a clear majority the wearing of headscarves in public. The 2010 report showed a stable and widespread scepticism towards Muslims and public expressions of Muslim religiosity.<sup>36</sup> In 2012, figures showed that attitudes towards Muslims and towards the building of mosques had become somewhat less negative.<sup>37</sup> Four in ten, 11 percentage points less than in 2010, express scepticism of people of Muslim faith. Among the political parties, the populist right wing Progress Party (which received 16,3 % of the votes in the 2013 parliamentary elections and was invited to form the new government together with the much larger Conservative Party) has repeatedly warned against 'Islamisation' during their electoral campaigns, for instance in 2009, when the party suggested that new and covert forms of Islamisation (*snikislamisering* – creeping Islamisation) could be identified in Norway. Similar stands have been voiced by groups associated with the New Christian Right, although their warnings against Islamisation have regularly been countered by mainstream Christian leaders.<sup>38</sup> Several smaller organisations such as Stop the Islamisation of Norway (SIAN) and Norwegian Defence League represent a more hostile discourse in public. In recent years, fear of 'radicalisation' of Muslim youth has become a recurrent topic in public debate,<sup>39</sup> particularly after a 2010 demonstration against another offending Muhammad-cartoon, in which one of the speakers (later to be associated with The Prophet's Ummah, see below) accused Norway of crusading against Islam and warned of a Norwegian 9/11.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Integreringsbarometeret 2010, *Holdninger til innvandrere, innvandring og integrering* (Integration barometer 2010, Attitudes to questions concerning immigrants, immigration and integration), IMDi Rapport/Report..

<sup>37</sup> Integreringsbarometeret 2012, *Holdninger til innvandrere, integrering og mangfold* (Integration barometer 2012, Attitudes to questions concerning immigrants, integration and diversity), IMDi Rapport/Report.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Leirvik, Oddbjørn, "The cartoon controversy in Norway: The new Christian right and liberal fundamentalism confronting Islam?", in Mårtensson, Ulrika et al. (eds.), I Ulrika Mårtensson m.fl. (red.): *Fundamentalism in the Modern World, volume 2: Culture, Media and the Public Sphere*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), pp. 125-146.

<sup>39</sup> See Lars Akerhaug: *Norsk jihad; muslimske ekstremister blant oss*. Oslo: Kagge 2013.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Lena Larsen: "Striden om Muhammad", *Dagbladet* 19.02.10.

Public opinion and debate in the second half of 2011 was shaped by the terrorist attacks of 22 July 2011. Although the nature of Anders Behring Breivik's violence shocked everyone, including anti-Islamic activists, ideologically his so-called Manifesto borrows extensively from well-known anti-Islamic ideologues, in Europe (for example, the Eurabia discourse<sup>41</sup>) and the US.<sup>42</sup> Before it became clear that the perpetrator was a white ethnic majority Norwegian and a self-declared "cultural Christian", the general tendency was to assume that radical Islamists were behind the violent attacks. As the terror attacks proved to be motivated by anti-Muslim, anti-immigration and anti-multiculturalist sentiments, however, some Muslims testified that they had never before felt so strongly embraced by popular solidarity. A joint Christian-Muslim funeral for one of the teenagers that were shot dead at Utøya, became a symbol of interreligious compassion. Nevertheless, in many Internet debates anti-Muslim sentiments remain unabated.<sup>43</sup>

In connection with the film "Innocence of Muslims", in 2012 a new group of mainly young Muslims called "The Prophet's Ummah" gained public attention for their fierce demonstration outside the American Embassy, rallying some 100 young people some of whom publicly invoked the example of Osama bin Laden. The Islamic Council, on the other hand, simultaneously held a meeting which could be seen as a counter-demonstration, with 6,000 participants including the Bishop of Oslo and the Mayor of Oslo.

## 16 MAJOR CULTURAL EVENTS

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<sup>41</sup> Sindre Bangstad: "Eurabia comes to Norway". *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 3: 2013, pp. 369-391

<sup>42</sup> Cf. the report "Fear, Inc. The Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America." Center for American Progress, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Andersson, Mette 'The debate about multicultural Norway before and after 22 July 2011', in *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 19:4, 418-427; Eriksen, Thomas H.: 'The net of hatred: after Utøya', *Open Democracy Net* 06.09.2011 ([www.opendemocracy.net/thomas-hylland-eriksen/net-of-hatred-after-ut%C3%B8ya](http://www.opendemocracy.net/thomas-hylland-eriksen/net-of-hatred-after-ut%C3%B8ya)) and Bangstad, Sindre: 'Whatever happened to Norway's incitement laws?' *IRR Newsletter* 20.10.2011 ([www.irr.org.uk/news/whatever-happened-to-norways-incitement-laws/](http://www.irr.org.uk/news/whatever-happened-to-norways-incitement-laws/)), both accessed 2 January 2014.



Since 2007, the Islamic Cultural Centre has staged an annual Eid Mela (festival) in Oslo, which attracts around 5,000 visitors. The event includes food, exhibition stalls, children's activities, and concerts featuring popular *nasheed* (Islam-oriented songs) artists. Several mosques and organisations host *iftar*-dinners in Ramadan. In 2012 Ung Muslim (UM), the youth organisation of the Rabita mosque in Oslo, initiated two yearly events: the Umma Cup (a soccer tournament) and the Umma Conference (featuring a number of international speakers). In Oslo, there is also a yearly 'multicultural' Mela featuring music styles and artists from around the world. In the city of Stavanger, the regional Muslim Council stages an annual Ramadan festival with a broad spectrum of public events..